$1.00 US
$1.25 CAN
22
MAY
UK 60p

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE
AUTHORITY

PART FOUR OF SEVEN

COSMOS IN COLLISION

QUASAR

A LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO...

DEATH!

WENDELL VAUGHN . . . THE FIRST EARTH MAN EVER APPOINTED PROTECTOR OF THE UNIVERSE. BONDED TO THE ENERGY-TRANSFORMING QUANTUM-BANDS THAT ARE BOTH WEAPONS AND SYMBOLS OF HIS STATION, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE TO DEFEND ALL LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE FROM COSMIC EVIL!

STAN LEE PRESENTS . . . QUASAR!

PROLOG IV: A LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO DEATH!

ON A SMALL ASTEROID SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDST OF THE SPRAWLING SHI'AR EMPIRE DWELLS A **WATCHER**, ONE OF AN ANCIENT RACE OF BEINGS WHO HAVE ASSUMED THE ENORMOUS TASK OF OBSERVING AND RECORDING ALL SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THE KNOWN WORLD.

DESPITE THE VAST SENSORY AND EXTRASENSORY POWERS POSSESSED BY ALL MEMBERS OF HIS SPECIES, THIS WATCHER IS UNAWARE THAT HE IS BEING WATCHED . . .

THIS TABLEAU TAKES PLACE IN THE RECENT PAST, AS TIME IS RECKONED ON EARTH.

MY ASSUMPTION OF *ANOMALY'S* MAJOR ASPECTS ENABLE ME TO *MASK* MY PRESENCE FROM THESE COSMIC VOYEURS, BUT AS SOON AS I BEGIN TO *DO* ANYTHING, I FEAR THEY WILL *SEE ME.*

SOMETHING MUST BE *DONE* ABOUT THE WATCHERS.

MARK GRUENWALD WRITER • GREG CAPULLO PENCILER • KEITH WILLIAMS INKER • JANICE CHIANG LETTERER

PAUL BECTON COLORIST • LEN KAMINSKI MANAGING EDITOR • HOWARD MACKIE EDITOR • TOM DeFALCO UBER-EDITOR

QUASAR™ Vol. 1, No. 22, May, 1991 Issue. (ISSN #1051-6832) Published by MARVEL COMICS; Terry Stewart, President; Stan Lee, Publisher; Michael Hobson, Group Vice President, Publishing. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. **SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES.** Published monthly. Copyright © 1991 by Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. All rights reserved. Price $1.00 per copy in the U.S. and $1.25 in Canada. Subscription rate for 12 issues: U.S. $12.00; Canada $17.00; and foreign $24.00. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. QUASAR (including all prominent characters featured in this issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof) is a trademark of the MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC. **POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO QUASAR, c/o MARVEL COMICS, 9TH FLOOR, 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. Printed in the U.S.A.**

DEATHLURGE--AH! YOU HEED MY SUMMONS!

YOUR ASCENSION AGREES WITH YOU, LORD MAELSTROM!

NOW HOW MIGHT I SERVE YOU?

I NEED TO ELIMINATE THE WATCHERS.

WHY? THEY ARE SWORN TO NEVER INTERFERE WITH WHAT THEY OBSERVE. WHAT HARM CAN THEY BE TO YOU?

THERE ARE THE OCCASIONAL RENEGADES AMONG THEM. WERE ONE TO BECOME AWARE OF MY CELESTIAL MACHINATIONS AND WARN THE WRONG PARTIES, SOME OF THE GREAT POWERS OF THE UNIVERSE COULD BECOME ALIGNED AGAINST ME.

CONSEQUENTLY, I MUST COME UP WITH A WAY TO ELIMINATE THEM, BUT DO IT IN SUCH A WAY SO AS NOT TO CALL ATTENTION TO MYSELF.

THERE IS A WAR IN EVERY LIVING BEING, EVEN AGELESS ENTITIES LIKE THE WATCHERS--

--BETWEEN, THE LIFE URGE... AND DEATH URGE... SELF-PRESERVATION AND BLISSFUL OBLIVION.

IF YOU COULD TIP THE BALANCE...

YES! LET THEM OBLITERATE THEMSELVES! SURELY WITHIN THEIR QUAINT VALUE SYSTEM IS A LOGICAL LOOPHOLE--AN ANOMALY--THAT CAN BE EXPLOITED.

I KNOW WHAT IT IS! DEATHURGE, INTO WHAT PASSES FOR YOUR MIND I SEND THE SECRET OF THE OBLIVION PLAGUE.

DESEMINATE IT--BEGINNING WITH THAT WATCHER DOWN THERE!

I GO!

SO DO I. I AM READY TO RETURN TO THE PLANET OF MY BIRTH AT LAST.

HMMM. I SENSE AN ENERGY BARRIER ERECTED AROUND IT... WERE I TO PASS THROUGH IT, SOMEONE WOULD KNOW IT.

WHO? WHO HAS THE POWER TO CREATE SO ELABORATE A CONSTRUCT? I MUST KNOW BEFORE I--

WHAT IS THIS? A STARSHIP OF UNEARTHLY DESIGN ESCAPING EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE...!

I SENSE ANOMALOUS BEINGS INSIDE. BEINGS OF POWER. PERHAPS THEY KNOW SOMETHING OF THE BARRIER'S FABRICATOR.

I WILL FOLLOW THEM. I SENSE THEY WILL LEAD ME TO SOMETHING USEFUL.

EARTH. THE LONG ISLAND ESTATE OF MALCOLM STROMBERG, ALIAS MAELSTROM.

THE PRESENT. MORNING.

DEAD... WHY AM I NOT DEAD YET?

SHOULD'VE BLED TO DEATH BY NOW.

WHY DOES HE HANG ME HERE LIKE A HUNTING TROPHY... INSTEAD OF KILLING ME?

WITHOUT MY HANDS, WITHOUT MY QUANTUM-BANDS, I'M USELESS... AS GOOD AS DEAD.

I'M THE BIGGEST SCREW-UP THAT EVER LIVED.

NOW MAELSTROM'S GOT MY QUANTUM-BANDS BUT HE CAN'T REMOVE THEM FROM MY ARMS TILL I'M DEAD...

PROBABLY STILL IN SHOCK...

MAELSTROM CUT OFF MY HANDS...

...MUST'VE STOPPED THE BLOOD FLOW WITH HIS POWER...CONTROL OVER KINETIC ENERGY...

HAD TO LET HIM DO IT TO ME... OR HE'D KILL THE REST OF MY FRIENDS LIKE HE DID TO POOR MAKKARI...

REMEMBER ALMOST NOTHING AFTER I FELT THE FIRST BITE OF THE KNIFE...MUST'VE GONE INTO SHOCK...

THOUGHT I'D ELIMINATED THE COSMIC ASSASSIN TWO DAYS AGO--TURNED OUT HE WAS JUST A STALKING HORSE TO MAKE ME LET DOWN MY GUARD...

MAELSTROM PLAYED ME LIKE I WAS A RANK AMATEUR...

...AND I'M STILL IN THE DARK ABOUT MAELSTROM'S STAKES IN THE GAME.

ALL I KNOW IS I'M DOOMED... MY FRIENDS ARE DOOMED...EON'S DOOMED... THE WORLD'S DOOMED... AND FOR ALL I KNOW THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS DOOMED.

DOUBT ANY PROTECTOR OF THE UNIVERSE HAS EVER SCREWED UP SO BADLY...

SO I'M USELESS...WORTHLESS... BEYOND REDEMPTION... ALL I WANT IS OUT...RELIEF FROM MY OVERWHELMING SENSE OF FAILURE.

COME ON, DEATH-- WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

QUASAR...?

REMEMBER ME?

YEAH. DEATHURGE.

YOU KNOW WHY I'M HERE?

TO TAKE MY LIFE.

NOT QUITE. REMEMBER WHEN LAST WE MET I SAID THE NEXT TIME YOU SAW ME YOU WOULD BEG FOR ME TO KILL YOU?*

WELL, I'M WAITING.

*BACK IN ISSUE #2.

IF YOU KILL ME, WILL IT END MY SUFFERING... TERMINATE MY CONSCIOUSNESS?

BUT OF COURSE!

THEN TAKE ME, DEATHURGE. I WANT TO DIE. I'M A WORTHLESS FOUL-UP. AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE HUMAN RACE. EVERYONE WOULD BE BETTER OFF WITH ME DEAD, ESPECIALLY ME.

THAT SOUNDS LIKE *WHINING*, NOT BEGGING. I DON'T *LIKE* WHINERS.

THEN I *BEG* YOU, DEATHURGE! *KILL ME!*

YOU FORGOT THE *OTHER PART* OF WHAT I TOLD YOU THE LAST TIME WE MET.

COME ON, YOU FACELESS PHANTASM--*PLEASE!!!*

WHAT?

THAT YOU WOULD BEG ME TO KILL YOU--AND I WOULD *REFUSE*.

THAT'S WHAT I'M *DOING*. A QUICK TRIP TO *OBLIVION* IS TOO *GOOD* FOR YOU.

YOU DESERVE TO *WALLOW* IN THE SHAMBLES YOU'VE MADE OF YOUR LIFE AND *SUFFER* SOME MORE...

WHAT?!? YOU CAN'T--

YOU CAN'T *MEAN* THAT!

AH, BUT I *CAN*.

GOODBYE.

I'VE GOT PLACES TO GO, PEOPLE TO *DELETE*.

WAIT! COME BACK!

COME BACK AND DO YOUR JOB, YOU MISERABLE--!

WHAT GOOD ARE YOU?

NO... THE QUESTION IS, MY SUCCESSOR, WHAT GOOD ARE *YOU*?

WHO...?

YOU SOUND LIKE YOU THINK VERY *LITTLE* OF YOURSELF.

CAPTAIN MARVEL!?!

ELSEWHERE IN THE MANSION...

THE QUANTUM-BANDS, LORD MAELSTROM... HOW ARE THEY *COMING*?

THE YOUTH WAS APPARENTLY *NOT* EXAGGERATING. THEY WILL NOT COME FREE OF HIS ARMS UNTIL HE IS *DEAD*.

THEN WHY DO YOU NOT *FINISH* WHAT YOU STARTED AND *KILL HIM*?

PATIENCE, *TRUTH*, MY DEAR. I WISH TO LEARN A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THE *RELATIONSHIP* BETWEEN THE WIELDER AND THE WEAPON BEFORE I PLACE THEM ON MY *OWN* WRISTS.

HOW DOES THE *LIFELINE* BETWEEN MAN AND MANACLE *WORK*? IN THE BRIEF TIME QUASAR HAS LEFT TO LIVE, HIS BANDS WILL SURRENDER TO ME THIS ESSENTIAL BIT OF *DATA*.

BUT YOU CANNOT *UTILIZE* THEM UNTIL THEY ADORN YOUR OWN ARMS.

NOT AS A *WEAPON*, NO.

COULD YOU NOT *WHITTLE AWAY* AT THE ARMS AND *SCOOP OUT* ALL THE ORGANIC MATERIAL FROM INSIDE THE BANDS?

THE AREA OF THE FOREARM *WITHIN* THE BANDS HAVE RESISTED MY ATTEMPTS TO DISLODGE HIS FLESH AND BONE IN ANY WAY. IT IS AS IF THE FLESH HAS BECOME IMPERVIOUS STONE.

NO MATTER, IT SHALL YIELD *SOON ENOUGH*. AND NOW, MY LOVELIES, *GATHER CLOSE*. I WISH FOR YOU TO JOIN YOUR *ALIEN PSYCHES* WITH MINE.

LET'S EXPLORE THE *SEVEN GEMS* OF EACH BRACELET IN *CLOSE COMMUNION*.

IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR ABSOLUTE *DEVOTION*... FOR YOUR SURRENDER OF YOUR INNATE *ABILITIES*, INEFFABLE *BODIES*, AND *FREE WILL* TO ME AND MY CAUSE... I ALLOW YOU TO *PARTICIPATE* IN THE MOST *IMPORTANT THING* HAPPENING *ANYWHERE* IN THE UNIVERSE AT THIS VERY MOMENT.

COME, *TRUTH*... *CHARM*... *BEAUTY*... TOUCH THE PRETTY BAUBLES, FEEL THEIR *THROBBING POWER*.

OF ALL THE CREATURES IN THE COSMOS, I CHOSE YOU THREE *WEIRD SISTERS* TO BE MY CONSORTS.

LOSE YOURSELF IN THE DANCE OF *PARTICLES* ABOUT US. LET YOUR MINDS AND BODIES *GO*. EXPERIENCE THE *RAPTURE* OF SUBMITTING TO THE *UNKNOWABLE*.

SHOW YOURSELF, *EON*, YOU MOST *SENILE* OF TIME BEINGS. SHOW US WHERE YOU *HIDE YOURSELF*, SO I CAN COME THERE AND PERFORM THE *INEVITABLE*...!

AHHH, THERE, THAT WASN'T SO *HARD*, WAS IT...?

ELSEWHERE...

YOU'RE *DEAD*. YOU *CAN'T* BE VISITING ME.

AM I *HALLUCINATING*?

ARE YOU ONE OF DEATHURGE'S *TRICKS*?

NO. I AM REALLY *MAR-VELL EON* SENT ME. HE'S STILL IN TOUCH--IN A WAY--WITH ALL *PAST* PROTECTORS OF THE UNIVERSE. IN A CERTAIN SENSE YOU COULD SAY THAT WE ALL *LIVE ON* IN HIM.

SO WHAT DID HE SEND YOU TO *TELL* ME? THAT I'M THE *WORST PROTECTOR* HE EVER APPOINTED AND HE WISHES HE'D HAVE GOTTEN *SOMEONE ELSE*?

NOT AT ALL, QUASAR. HE SENT ME TO TELL YOU HE WAS *SORRY* ABOUT ALL THAT YOU'VE HAD TO GO THROUGH BECAUSE OF *HIM*.

REALLY?

REALLY?

THE THING HE DID WITH YOUR *FATHER*--REANIMATING HIM TO KEEP YOU FROM KNOWING HE HAD *DIED*... HE DID THAT TO *SPARE* YOUR FEELINGS, NOT *HURT* THEM.

HE SEES NOW THAT WHAT HE DID WAS *WRONG*.

YOU REALLY SHOULD *EXCUSE* CERTAIN THINGS IN HIM, QUASAR. HE IS VERY ALIEN. HE DOESN'T KNOW SOME OF THE FINER POINTS OF HUMANOID EXPERIENCE.

HIS MIND IS SO FILLED WITH ALL THE *COLD HARD FACTS* OF THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE. THE UNIVERSE OF *EMOTIONS*, *PERSONAL BONDS*, *FEELINGS*--HE KNOWS IT *EXISTS* BUT HASN'T THE SLIGHTEST *UNDERSTANDING* OF IT.

I...FORGIVE *HIM*, CAPTAIN.

IT'S *MYSELF* I CAN'T FORGIVE.

LOOK AT ME. I'M A *FAILURE*. I WASN'T *UP* TO THE JOB HE APPOINTED *ME* TO DO.

YOU WERE! YOU STOPPED *THANOS*, THE GREAT THREAT TO THE UNIVERSE EON GROOMED *YOU* TO COMBAT.

YES... BUT I DIDN'T STOP HIM *COMPLETELY*. HE'S COME BACK FROM THAT INITIAL DEFEAT I DEALT HIM *TWICE* NOW, UP TO HIS *SAME OLD TRICKS*.

EVEN AS WE SPEAK, HE'S GOT SOMETHING GOING ON THAT'S HIS MOST *AUDACIOUS SCHEME* YET. IF *MAELSTROM* DOESN'T MANAGE TO ROCK THE COSMOS TO ITS VERY FOUNDATIONS, *THANOS* IS RIGHT BEHIND HIM WAITING HIS TURN.

AND WHERE AM *I*? IF I'M *DEAD*, I CAN'T DO A THING.

AND DID I FALL FIGHTING THE *GOOD FIGHT*?

NO. I DIED IN *BED*, A VICTIM OF MY *BODY'S OWN BETRAYAL*.

YOU SEE, WHAT WE ACTUALLY ACCOMPLISHED JUST DOESN'T *MATTER*. THERE IS *ALWAYS* MORE TO DO.

WHAT MATTERS IS WHAT WE *TRIED* TO ACCOMPLISH. FOR IT IS IN THE *TRYING* THAT THE VITAL *SPIRIT* OF SENTIENT BEINGS EVERYWHERE SHOWS THAT AN *INDIVIDUAL* CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

I TRIED TO BE THE *BEST* PROTECTOR I COULD BE. SO DID *YOU*.

I KNOW THAT.

EON DOES, TOO.

MY TIME'S UP.

FAREWELL... *BROTHER*.

THE BASEMENT...

ZZZZ

H.D. ...? COME ON, SIT HERE WITH *US*.

SITTING WILL MAKE ME FEEL EVEN *MORE HELPLESS*.

WHAT CAN *ANY* OF US DO? THAT MADMAN STOPPED MIKE'S HEART, CUT OFF THE BOSS'S *HANDS*--AND THOSE GUYS HAD *SUPER-POWERS*! KAYLA, YOU, AND ME--WE'RE JUST *ORDINARY* PEOPLE

THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE *WRONG, KEN*... I AM ANYTHING *BUT* ORDINARY.

HULP.

I WAS BORN *HEATHER DOUGLAS*--THAT'S WHAT THE *H.D.* STANDS FOR--BUT I AM *BETTER* KNOWN BY THE NAME I WAS GIVEN BY THE PRIESTS OF TITAN...

MOONDRAGON!

YEAH! I *HEARD* OF HER. WASN'T SHE--ER, *YOU* AN AVENGER FOR A WHILE?

YES. OFF AND ON, OVER THE YEARS.

IN FACT, IT WAS AT AN *AVENGERS MEETING* WHERE I MET QUASAR...*

* AVENGERS #305.

"MY PSIONIC POWERS IMMEDIATELY ENABLED ME TO GLEAN WHO HE WAS--

"--SUCCESSOR TO CAPTAIN MAR-VELL AS THE PROTECTOR OF THE UNIVERSE, AND I FOUND THAT EXTREMELY... ATTRACTIVE.

"YOU SEE, ONCE I'D BEEN PASSED OVER AS THE CELESTIAL MADONNA--

WHAT ABOUT MADONNA?

--BUT HERE WAS A CHANCE TO REALIZE SOMETHING ALMOST AS GOOD... TO BECOME A CONSORT TO THE MOST COSMIC MAN IN THE UNIVERSE.

I'D BE PERFECT FOR HIM. I HAD PLENTY OF EXPERIENCE IN COSMIC AFFAIRS...

I'D BEEN PRESENT AT THE DEFEAT OF TWO OF THE MOST POWERFUL MORTAL BEINGS THIS SECTOR'S EVER KNOWN--THANOS AND KORVAC.

"MY READING OF QUASAR'S MIND TOLD ME THAT THE DIRECT APPROACH WOULD NOT WORK WITH HIM...

"...SO I DECIDED TO TAKE AN INDIRECT ROUTE. FIRST I CREATED FOR MYSELF AN UNASSUMING IDENTITY...

...AND WITH IT, I PROCEEDED TO WALK INTO VAUGHN SECURITY SYSTEMS TO OFFER MY PROFESSIONAL SERVICES.*

WHEN QUASAR SAID THE COMPANY'S WORK LOAD DID NOT WARRANT AN ADDITION TO THE STAFF, I OFFERED TO ACQUIRE FIVE NEW CLIENTS AS MY ADMISSION TICKET.

AS YOU MIGHT GUESS, IT WAS CHILD'S PLAY FOR ME TO SCAN THE MINDS OF VARIOUS CORPORATION HEADS AND TAILOR MY SALES PITCHES TO WHAT EACH BELIEVED HIS COMPANY NEEDED.

*ISSUE #12.

"ONCE ENSCONCED AT VAUGHN SECURITY, I SEIZED THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMUNE WITH QUASAR'S MENTOR, THE ANCIENT BEING EON, IN ORDER TO OFFER HIM MY SERVICES...

"YOU SEE, SECURING EON'S APPROVAL OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARD CONVINCING QUASAR THAT A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN US WAS HIGHLY DESIRABLE, SO I THOUGHT.

"EON AGREED NOT TO TELL QUASAR WHO I REALLY WAS IF I WOULD PERFORM A TASK FOR HIM: TO PROTECT YOUR MINDS FROM HARM.

WHAT? YOU MEAN *KEN'S* AND *MINE*?

YES, YOU SEE, EON KNEW IT WAS HIS ENEMY--*STROMBERG*, AS IT TURNS OUT--WHO STOPPED THE FLOW OF BLOOD TO QUASAR'S *FATHER'S BRAIN*--

--GIVING HIM THAT FATAL *CEREBRAL HEMORRHAGE*.

EON DIDN'T WANT HIM TO DO THE SAME TO *YOU TWO*.

BUT... WHY WOULD STROMBERG *WANT* TO? WHAT DID *WE* EVER DO TO HIM?

STROMBERG'S MIND IS *PROOF* TO MINE--BUT I IMAGINE HE JUST WANTED TO *UPSET* QUASAR, IMPAIR HIM *EMOTIONALLY*, WEAKEN HIS *JUDGMENT* AND *STABILITY*.

SO I'VE BEEN *INSIDE* YOUR MINDS FOR THE PAST FEW WEEKS, HOPING TO WARD OFF A POSSIBLE *CEREBRAL ATTACK*.

WHAT ABOUT *MIKE*? COULDN'T YOU HAVE... HAVE... DONE *SOMETHING*?

SINCE MIKE IS AN *ETERNAL*, HIS BRAINCELLS WERE SOMEWHAT MORE *DIFFICULT* TO. SAFEGUARD...

...AND ONCE WE GOT *HERE*, MY MENTAL POWERS WERE TOTALLY DAMPENED BY ONE OF *STROMBERG'S NIECES*... AND THEN THAT HORRID *LITTLE MAN* I THREW THE KNIFE AT HAD MANIPULATED THE *FEAR CENTERS* OF MY BRAIN...

AND NOW... THE MAN I WAS BORN TO LOVE IS *DYING*... WE ARE *TRAPPED* IN THE HOUSE OF A MADMAN WHOSE CAPACITY FOR COSMIC EVIL IS SO GREAT THAT *EON* DREADS HIM...

...AND I AM AS *POWERLESS* AS ANY OTHER HUMAN BEING TO STOP THE *DARK FATE* IN STORE FOR THE UNIVERSE...!

UPSTAIRS...

WENDELL, DO YOU HAVE A MOMENT...?

NNH...?

DAD?!?

BUT--!

YES, SON...

I KNOW. I SHOULDN'T BE HERE SINCE I'M *DEAD*. REMEMBER THAT DISCUSSION WE ONCE HAD ABOUT DEATH... WHEN I TOLD YOU THAT I DON'T *BELIEVE* IN ANY SORT OF *AFTERLIFE*...?

YEAH?

WELL, I *STILL* DON'T. MY PRESENCE HERE DOESN'T PROVE A *THING* EXCEPT THAT EON IS CAPABLE OF CREATING A LIFELIKE *ENERGY-SIMULACRUM* OF ME AND IMBUE IT WITH WHAT HE REMEMBERS MY *CONSCIOUSNESS* TO BE.

I DID SPEND A LOT OF TIME IN THE *EONVERSE*, YOU'LL RECALL.

YEAH, DAD, AND I... I *RESENTED* IT. I WAS *JEALOUS* OR SOMETHING.

WHEN I THINK OF THE *LAST CONVERSATION* WE HAD BEFORE YOU DIED--HOW I ACTED LIKE SUCH A *JERK*--!

THAT REALLY DOESN'T *MATTER* NOW, SON.

BET YOU'RE PRETTY *ASHAMED* OF ME, HUH? I NEVER *WAS* ABLE TO LIVE UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS AT ANYTHING...!

EVEN WHEN I GOT THE JOB AS EARTH'S *COSMIC COP*, IT FELT LIKE YOU DIDN'T THINK I WAS *UP TO THE JOB*.

YOU WERE *RIGHT*, DAD. I'M IN WAY OVER MY *HEAD*...

WENDELL, YOU *KNOW* I WAS NEVER ANY GOOD AT *EXPRESSING* HOW I FELT. BUT I'M TELLING YOU NOW THAT I WAS *PROUD* OF YOU, SON.

MAYBE A LITTLE *JEALOUS*, TOO. EACH GENERATION WANTS THEIR *PROGENY* TO DO A LITTLE *BETTER* THAN THEY DID--

--BUT WHAT *YOU* ACHIEVED WAS JUST SO MUCH BETTER THAN ANYTHING I COULD EVER HAVE HOPED TO HAVE ACCOMPLISHED... IT WAS HARD TO *ACCEPT*.

SO YOU SEE, SON. *I'M* NOT PERFECT EITHER. NOW YOU KNOW WHERE YOU *GET* IT FROM. PLEASE *FORGIVE ME*.

DAD--IT'S *ME* WHO NEEDS FORGIVENESS HERE, NOT *YOU*. YOU'RE MY DAD. YOU *RAISED* ME, HELPED SHAPE MY *VALUES*, INFLUENCED ME IN ALMOST *EVERYTHING*.

SO YOU WERE A LITTLE JEALOUS. *BIG DEAL! I'M* THE ONE WHO *MESSED UP* SO BADLY I'M HANGING HERE WITHOUT MY HANDS LIKE A HUNTER'S TROPHY!

YOU WERE GIVEN AN *IMPOSSIBLE JOB*, PROTECTING THE WHOLE UNIVERSE BUT YOU DIDN'T LET IT *DAUNT* YOU. YOU *DIDN'T GIVE UP*. YOU DID YOUR *BEST*. NO MAN COULD HAVE DONE *BETTER*.

I *DID* TRY TO DO MY BEST. BUT I KNOW *PLENTY* OF PEOPLE WHO COULD HAVE DONE BETTER THAN ME. *CAPTAIN AMERICA*, TO NAME BUT ONE.

REGARDLESS, YOU DID ALL YOU WERE *CAPABLE* OF DOING. WHAT MORE CAN ANYONE *ASK*?

I'M *VERY PROUD* OF YOU, SON. I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO WAIT TILL I WAS *DEAD* TO HEAR IT.

AND IF SAYING I *FORGIVE* YOU WILL HELP MAKE THE HORRIBLE ORDEAL YOU'RE GOING THROUGH ANY EASIER, YOU *HAVE* IT.

I HAVE TO *GO* NOW, WENDELL. I FEEL MY CONSCIOUSNESS BEGINNING TO... *UNFOCUS*.

TAKE *CARE*, MY SON.

I LOVE YOU.

WHILE ELSEWHERE...

OHHH, MAELSTROM--!

MASTER--!

MMMM--!

AHH. THE INEFFABLE RAPTURE OF IMMERSION, IN THE *INFINITE*, EH, MY LOVELIES...?

WITH THE SYNERGISTIC MELDING OF OUR *PSIONIC GIFTS*, I HAVE EXPLORED THE FOURTEEN QUANTUM-GEMS TO MY *SATISFACTION*.

BEAUTY!

GO TELL *PHOBIUS* THAT QUASAR HAS SERVED HIS PURPOSE. HE MAY EXPEDITE HIS *DEMISE*.

OKAY.

TRUTH--CHARM-- WATCH ME AS I OPEN THE GATEWAY TO THE *EONVERSE!*

EON! YOU GHASTLY GLOB OF DISTILLED *TIME*--I'M COMING O *KIIIIIIIILL* YOUUUUUUU!

ELSEWHERE...

QUASAR? ARE YOU DONE DYING YET?

HNNNH?

ZZTAK

DIDN'T THINK SO. THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.

YOU'RE NOT A PHANTOM...

BEEN HALLUCINATING, HAVEN'T YOU, PRETTY BOY? HA!

KNOW WHAT I'M HERE FOR, BOY? I'M HERE TO BEAT YOU TO DEATH. WOULD YOU LIKE THAT, BOY?

YES.

YOU HEROES! FALSE BRAVADO TO THE END!

NOW I'M GOING TO WHIP YOU A MERE 39 TIMES. AND AS I DO, I WANT YOU TO KEEP COUNT FOR ME, UNDERSTAND ME, BOY?

OKAY. HERE GOES.

ZZTAK

ONE.

VERY GOOD. I *LIKE* A BOY WHO CAN FOLLOW ORDERS. LET'S GO FOR *TWO*, SHALL WE?

ZTAK

ONE.

WHAT WAS *THAT*, BOY? *TWO* COMES AFTER ONE, REMEMBER?

ANOTHER INDICTMENT OF THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

OKAY, NOW LET'S SEE IF YOU KNOW WHAT COMES AFTER *TWO*.

ZTAK

ONE.

ARE YOU AN *IDIOT?!?* I'LL *NEVER* GET TO 39 IF YOU KEEP REPEATING "*ONE*"!!!

WAIT! YOU'RE TRYING TO *TAUNT* ME, YES... *THAT* MUST BE IT. YOU THINK YOU CAN MAKE ME LOOK *FOOLISH*, DON'T YOU, PRETTY BOY?

NOBODY MAKES ME, PHOBIUS, LOOK FOOLISH, BOY-- *NOBODY!* I AM THE *MASTER OF FEAR* AND THE *KING OF PAIN!*

ZZTAK ZZTAK ZZTAK ZZTAK ZZTAK ZZTAK ZZTAK

ONE. ONE. ONE. ONE. ONE. ONE. ONE.

SHUUUUUT UUUUUP!

ZZTAK

HAHHAHHAHA

HNNH HNNH HNNH

I LOST COUNT, BUT THAT MUST HAVE BEEN *AT LEAST* 39...

NOW DO US *BOTH* A FAVOR, PRETTY BOY...

...AND *DIE.*

LATER...

HI, BUNKY! YOU WANNA *DIE*, HUH?

?

I *KNOW*, I *KNOW*. YA WANNA KNOW WHO THE HOLY HECK *AM* I, RIGHT10?

I'M *KID REAPER*, YOUR VERY OWN PERSONAL *VISION OF DEATH* ITSELF!

COOLNESS, HUH?

WHAT'S *THAT*? YOU DON'T *BELIEVE* ME?!? I'M *SHOCKED!*

LISSEN--NOBODY'LL *HELP* YOU, SEE? EVEN THE OTHER INCARNATIONS OF DEATH HAVE THROWN IN WITH OBLIVION. YER TEETERIN' ON THE VERY BRINK OF THE *BIG CHILL*, BUT YA STILL HAVE A *PINKY-HOLD* ON THE LAND OF THE LIVIN' THAT YOU JUST CAN'T *BRING* YERSELF TO LET GO.

YOU GOT ONE HECKUVA STRONG *WILL TO LIVE*, BUNKY!

SO WHADJA GO AND *DO?* YOU TOOK A *SMIDGEN* OF THE *DEATH-FORCE* THAT'S IN YA AND YOU FASHIONED ME AS YER *UNHEAVENLY LIL' HELPMATE!*

JUST BETWEEN YOU AN' *ME*, BUNK--I THINK YOU WERE READIN' TOO MANY *HARVEY COMICS* AS A KID!

THIS IS LIKE THE MOST *RIDICULOUS* FORM AN ANGEL OF DEATH HAS EVER TAKEN, KNOWHUTAMEAN?

ALL SERIOUSNESS, *ASIDE*, BUNKY, IF YOU REALLY HONESTLY TRULY WANT TO DIE... I'LL *HELP* YOU.

THAT NOD I'LL TAKE AS A *YES*.

OKAY, BUNKY--IT'S *YOUR FUNERAL!*

CRUSH

THE REALM OF EON...

EON, EON, EON...

...YOUR BODY'S DISGUSTING, YOU KNOW THAT?

WHAT?

THE QUANTUM-BANDS HAVE COME OFF QUASAR'S HANDS! THAT MEANS HE'S DEAD AT LAST!

AND THE BANDS ARE MINE!

THE WINE CELLAR...

NOOOO

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK...

A BLOODCURDLING CRY OF MENTAL ANGUISH -- PIERCING THE ETHER...

INNOCENT BLOOD HAS BEEN SPILT!

SOMEONE MUST PAY!

CONTINUED!